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A
L E T T E R
TO
Dr. RUTHERFORTH;

Occasioned by his

Second Vindication,

Against

The *C O N F E S S I O N A L*,

By D^r Benj. Lawson



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A
L E T T E R
TO THE
Rev. *Dr. Rutherford,*

ARCHDEACON of ESSEX, &c. &c.

Occasioned by his

SECOND VINDICATION
Of the Right of
PROTESTANT CHURCHES
TO
Require the CLERGY to SUBSCRIBE
TO AN
ESTABLISHED CONFESSION
OF
FAITH and DOCTRINES.

From the EXAMINER of the FIRST.

*Cui tua non odium, vel cui portenta cachinnum
Non moveant posthac, is mihi prodigium est.*

POP. COUR.

Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid.

ST. PAUL.

L O N D O N.

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A
L E T T E R

TO THE

Rev. *Dr. Rutherford.*

S I R,

THE manner in which you have conducted your SECOND VINDICATION can only be looked upon as calculated to draw me into that disgraceful situation in which I have sometimes seen an honest, fair, and, in the beginning, successful, disputant at last involved. The victor, young and impatient in the advantageous post already gained, is tempted to quit it and follow the enemy through those intricate defiles in which, driven from the field, he seeks to secure himself; hoping no longer indeed to atchieve glory, but, how-
B ever,

2 *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. RUTHERFORTH.*

ever, to tarnish the victor's, if he can draw him into danger and disgrace. — Bear with me, Sir, if the allusion has a cast of vanity. But I do think the EXAMINER has hitherto fought fair, met the VINDICATOR in open field, and, if he must not say, *driven him off*, yet, that his antagonist has *quitted*, the field, and would provoke the battle from a distant quarter. — To drop the metaphor.

I HAVE examined your first VINDICATION, as to the force and tendency of the argument contained therein, without once, to my knowledge, deviating from the subject to cast a personal reflection, or officiously and unfriendly to intrude into the question between you and the writer of the CONFSSIONAL. This gave me the reasonable hope, that I should find the VINDICATOR, if the honour of his remarks might be expected, keeping equally clear of ungenteel reflection, and the question unembarrassed with such impertinent and foreign strictures, as I had carefully avoided. — But I am disappointed. — The question
is,

is, for the most part, involved in a mist of disingenuous insinuations, treated without any order, sometimes evaded, at other times shifted.

WHAT must be done in this awkward situation? — To answer your letter will hardly be to touch on the subject first engaged in. Do you expect, that I should attempt to develop the question from the cloud of obscurity which now covers it; and patiently and painfully answer one by one your objections to, or rather strictures upon, the EXAMINATION? — What a laborious task have you set me! And, of what patience must you suppose our readers to be possessed, to expect their attendance upon us through this clumsy process of *vindicating* and *examining* to the end; could they hope ever to see it ended? — This must not be attempted. Let us have mercy on our readers, whatever becomes of the dispute, and our own reputations in managing it. Silence, after the question has received, from the second VINDICATION,

ON,

4 *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. RUTHERFORTH.*

ON, so different an aspect from what it had in the first, would perhaps be the most prudent for both sides. It appears, however, most eligible to me, and what I should certainly have observed, for my own part, could I have possibly dispensed with returning, by one answer at least, the respect shewn me in your considering my performance, though *unimportant* in itself, of consequence *enough* to induce you to begin the correspondence.

You set out with complaining, that I make no reply to the latter of your arguments brought in support of your first VINDICATION “ from the commands given by “ St. PAUL to TIMOTHY and TITUS to “ take care, that those whom they appointed pastors and teachers, should be such “ as held fast the faithful word agreeably to “ what they had been taught, the mystery “ of the faith in a pure conscience *.” — There was no occasion for the complaint.

* 2 Vindication, page 1.

The omission could not wrong the argument. If it had much force, you was left in full possession of it; and less work was cut out for you, being called upon to defend one instead of both your arguments.

BUT I make no reply; "and yet, you
" say, the right is the same, and the tenden-
" cy of it is the same, by whichever of the
" two it is proved." — One would think,
Sir, you was apologizing for, not blaming,
me; that I omitted taking notice of this
latter argument. For, if "the right is the
" same and the tendency of it the same,
" by whichever of the arguments it is prov-
" ed," where was the necessity of examin-
ing both? — If *one* of your arguments has
been refuted and the scandalous tendency
of it fully exposed, then the right which
you contend for, has been disproved, no
less effectually, than if I had refuted your
other argument, since "the right is the
" same — by *whichever* of the arguments
" it is proved."

You

6 *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. RUTHERFORTH.*

You very gravely, however, call upon me to consider, what I have done by *omitting* this argument, and *committing* the other to examination. “If our readers, you say, for want of your help should be convinced by the precepts of St. PAUL on the one hand, that this right belongs to church-governours, and by your reasonings on the other, that such a right is inconsistent with the true principles of the reformation; you leave them to conclude, that the principles of the reformation are inconsistent with the authority of the apostle *.” — But take heart, Sir. If our readers are convinced, that I have, on the principles of the reformation, fully refuted one of your arguments for the right in question, they will hardly think, that your other argument for it can rest on scripture-principles. By omitting, therefore, to examine the argument you frame on the words of St. PAUL, after having convinced our readers, that your claim cannot be ad-

* 2 Vind. p. 1, 2.

mitted but on popish principles, I leave them to conclude, not, “ that the principles of the reformation are inconsistent “ with the authority of the apostle,” but, that you must certainly have mistaken the apostle.

AND now, Sir, consider coolly with yourself, seeing there is so little danger from the omission, of our readers’ forming a conclusion that would be unfavourable to the principles of the reformation, and so little harm done thereby to yourself, whether I deserved for it the severe animadversion which you have thought proper to make upon me in the following terms: “ You must have read “ the discourse which you undertake to examine, very carelessly, if you overlooked “ this argument, and you must be very ill “ qualified for the office of an EXAMINER, “ if you did not see the force of it to prove “ the right in question, for which purpose “ I produced it*.” — The personal reflect-

* 2 Vind. p. 12.

8 *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. RUTHERFORTH.*

ion, Sir, upon my abilities, is best answered by perfect silence; and, however just it may be, would have come better from any one else, than the person, whose judgment on that head cannot, with decency, anticipate the decision of the public.

As to the charge of carelessness in perusing your book, I cannot help thinking, that you are very sensible I must have read it with great care. But, however that be, my omitting to consider St. PAUL's direction concerning deacons did not proceed from carelessness, but was owing to the manifest impertinency of the quotation, with reference to the point in question. It never occurred to me, that you could mean it for another direct argument in support of the right contended for, but only as one of your strictures upon the CONFSSIONAL; with which, therefore, I had no farther concern, than as it might tend to illustrate the nature of your argument*. And as such, Sir, let me remind you, that this passage

* Examination, p. 3.

from

A Letter to the Rev. Dr. RUTHERFORTH. 9

from St. PAUL, to which you now give the name of *another argument*, is taken notice of in the EXAMINATION. You will find it in the tenth page, referred to in order to shew your sentiments on the article of subscription, in general, to revealed truth; as follows: "This is deemed by the PROFESSOR very insufficient to satisfy church-governours in our days, which was so unlikely to satisfy TIMOTHY or TITUS, that they, who made it *, were found in the faith."

THIS was done, and this was all that appeared to be necessary, and to my purpose, as an examiner of your sentiments on the subject. What think you now, Sir? — Who is the careless reader? — Or how came this to be overlooked? — TIMOTHY and TITUS stood forth in large characters. To strike the VINDICATOR's attention there was

* Solemn declaration of their belief in scripture as the word of God.

to *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. RUTHERFORTH.*

not wanting that typographical *fescue*, the sparing use of which in the CHARGE is by you supposed * to occasion mistakes and omissions in the EXAMINER.

BUT do you really chuse, Sir, that this quotation from St. PAUL should be considered as *another* argument in support of the right contended for? — It is wonderful you should chuse it. For it is not so much *beside* your purpose, as it is palpably *opposite* thereto. It would not have surprised me so much, if the writer of the CONFESIONAL had quoted it in support of *his* opinion. Let us see, however, if (allowing your own construction of the apostle's design, and every one of those circumstances in this passage of which you would avail yourself) it has, after all, the least semblance of favour for your side of the question.

* 2 Vind. p. 4.

THE apostle writes thus to TIMOTHY*: *Likewise must the deacons be grave — holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.* — This you call a *command* from the apostle to TIMOTHY. The occasion of it you suppose to be the *ordination* of deacons; whom you further suppose to be the same with *pastors* and *teachers*.

Now, admitting these circumstances in your favour, each of which might, consistently with the rules of just criticism, be disputed with you, how does it appear, that you have the authority of this apostle for that claim of church-power, in matters of faith and conscience, which you undertake to vindicate? — It has appeared, that you contend for a subscription to *such* a confession as church-governours shall please to enjoin†; that the governours of every particular church have a right to enjoin subscription, not only to the scriptures in general, or to the most particular tenets conceiv-

* 1 Tim. iii. 9.

† Exam. p. 43.

12 *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. RUTHERFORTH.*

ed in scripture terms, but to *any* confession of faith *they* shall judge to be scriptural *; and you even reject scripture-terms and expressions, as improper and inadequate to the purpose of subscription †.

COMPARE now the apostolic command, supposed to refer to the ordination of pastors and teachers, with your sentiments on the same subject. — *Likewise must the deacons be grave, &c. — holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.* — Do these words countenance your opinion? — Doth St. PAUL command, or even recommend to TIMOTHY, to exercise any such arbitrary and inquisitorial authority over those, whom he should appoint pastors and teachers, as you contend for? — Far from it. Not one *particular* point of faith is here specified, as a necessary article to be *subscribed*, or solemnly declared (for I acknowledge no greater difference between the two than you do) by the candidate, for his admission

* Exam. p. 11, 12. † Exam. p. 12, 13. Charge, p. 11.

to holy orders. The direction is conceived in the most *general* terms, as general as your opponents themselves can desire. Do you really know, Mr. PROFESSOR, of any one so great a latitudinarian in the article of subscription, that he would not willingly submit to be so reasonably questioned concerning his faith? — Does the writer of the CONFSSIONAL himself plead, in the case of subscription, for more liberty than TIMOTHY was warranted to grant to those under his examination for holy orders? — I think not, Sir. But, as I chuse not to be answerable for any man's opinion on this subject but my own, so I affect not the honour of giving my assistance to that gentleman who needs it not: *Non tali auxilio*. — I answer for myself; that you could not have pitched upon a passage less likely to serve your cause.

HOWEVER, you think not so. To you it appears full and decisive in your favour.

“ It is enough for us, say you, to find that
“ St. PAUL — gave TIMOTHY and TITUS

“ no

14 *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. RUTHERFORTH.*

“no directions to use *only* scripture-language*.” — Enough, Sir! — Enough for what? — Is it enough to satisfy us of the propriety of forming confessions in language *unscriptural*? or, of the right to require the same to be subscribed by the clergy, and to set them forth to the laity, as what they are *bound* in conscience to believe † — every one of the articles in the sense, and no other, fixed upon it by church-governours — fixed, not by means of the words of CHRIST and his apostles, which might lead them to believe it in a different sense, but by means of unscriptural terms and expressions, as more precisely conveying the sense of the church-governours ‡, who understand them to be *bound* in conscience to believe it as they have it set forth? — Is this all you have to offer from scripture for your mode of confession? — Is the silence itself of the apostle about it a

* Charge, p. 10.

† Charge, p. 14. Exam. p. 25, 26.

‡ Charge, p. 11. Exam. p. 15, 16.

proof,

proof, that it is *scriptural*? — Call not this *indignant exclamation* *. I am at a loss to express my own astonishment at, and to excite your attention to, the futility of your argument.

You may, perhaps, be allowed “to conclude from hence, that TIMOTHY and TITUS were left at liberty to propose their questions in any words, which would ascertain *their* meaning †.” But what of this? — Ought you to conclude, that they thought themselves at liberty to question their candidates in terms and expressions *ill* adapted to ascertain the meaning of *scripture*? — Would they be justified, as acting agreeably to the apostle’s command, if they had taken upon themselves to try the faith of the candidates by articles drawn up in *such* terms as, how precisely soever they might convey their *own* meaning, might mislead them from the true *scriptural* sense? — Surely not. They

* 2 Vind. p. 4.

† Charge, p. 10.

would

would think themselves obliged to propose nothing, as a test of orthodoxy, that was not *certainly* and *manifestly* such. In short, if they thought themselves at liberty "to
" propose their questions in any words,
" which would ascertain *their* meaning," they would first be *sure*, that *their* meaning was the meaning of *scripture*. They would not insist upon any *doubtful* points or abstruse speculations, such as might perplex, or be differently understood by, sincere believers, and, perhaps, mistaken by themselves; they would not do this, and then excuse or justify their having required the assent and consent of the candidates to an erroneous article of faith, by saying that the articles proposed were all scriptural, according to the best of *their* judgement. They had no commission from the apostle, at least, that appears in the passage under consideration, to propose any articles of faith, of the truth of which they could not be *certain*, or even to propose any questions whatsoever, more than were sufficient to convince them that the candidates were
sincere

sincere in their professing christianity, or (to come nearer to the point) to require more
“ than a solemn declaration on the part of
“ teachers and pastors, that they received
“ the scriptures as the word of God, and
“ would, in a pure conscience instruct the
“ people out of them*.”

BUT allowing, that these primitive church-governours might exercise more authority in their examination of candidates than this comes to ; yet how far short must it have been of *that* authority which you vindicate in behalf of church-governours in our days ! — You contend, that the governours of every particular church have a right to require subscription to any confession of faith that is scriptural in *their* judgement ; to reject as insufficient for the ministry †, such as desire to be employed therein, but cannot conscientiously subscribe to every article in the sense fixed upon it by fallible men, and to eject out of that office

* Confessional, p. 16.

† Exam. p. 10, 11, 20, 21.

any ministers that may be teaching the people “the mystery of the faith in a *pure* “*conscience*,” though in a sense, on some parts thereof, different from that fixed in the established confession. — Hard lot for these conscientious persons under either predicament ! — In one case, to be *refused* “the benefit of subscription” and forced to “apply themselves to *some other way* of getting a livelihood * !” — In the other case, to be *deprived* of the benefit and forced to *quit the way*, in which they see some getting no bad livelihood ! — But you will find nothing of this kind, no such inquisitorial authority delegated to TIMOTHY, nor such bitter effects of it overtaking either the candidates or the ministers within his diocese and justified by this command of the apostle ; *The deacons must be grave, &c.* — *holding the mystery of the faith in a PURE CONSCIENCE.*

I HAVE considered this text, Sir, in your own view and acceptation of it, and it appears quite foreign to your purpose. I could further make it appear, that you are mistak-

* Charge, p. 5.

en in your acceptation of it. But, from what has been said, you are left to judge, whether the omission you complain of was designed to evade the *force* of what you call your *second argument* founded on this passage.

THE next reflection you make on the EXAMINER is of a very different kind from the foregoing. I have no sooner exculpated myself from the charge of gross negligence or a wilful omission, than I am to answer to the charge of taking too much pains. I am told, that I have spent *eight* pages in enquiring into a distinction you made, when a “*little* attention would have saved me this “trouble*.” — But, Sir, if I had saved myself this trouble, in the way you speak of, by giving but a *little* attention, instead of *carefully* attending to your manner of expression and enquiring into the *force* of your words, lest I should mistake your meaning, should I not have fallen under the other charge of *negligence* and *omission*? — You would then, probably, have told me, that “I must have “read your discourse very *carelessly* to over-

* 2 Vind. p. 2.

“look

“ look this *distinction*; and that I must be
 “ very ill qualified for the office of an Ex-
 “ AMINER, if I did not see the *force* of it*.”

To see the force of it, I own, exceeded my penetration. But I did my best endeavour to see it: and, as the trouble I gave myself was entirely in your favour, *viz.* to prevent a misrepresentation of your meaning, so you might have more kindly accepted my well-meant, though fruitless, attempt.

BUT, besides this ingenuous acknowledgement of my want of sufficient sagacity in this matter, our readers shall be acquainted with the distinction which occasioned my embarrassment. It is but reasonable they should know, how much the confused EXAMINER is indebted to the VINDICATOR for his very dextrous solution of the difficulty.

“ GIVE me leave, you kindly say, to clear
 “ up a difficulty which embarrasses you for

* 2 Vind. p. 12.

“ eight pages together. They are spent in
“ enquiring, how I mean to distinguish,
“ where I say, that † *church-governours*
“ *have introduced new and unscriptural*
“ *words and expressions into established con-*
“ *fessions, not to fix the sense of scripture-*
“ *doctrines, but to fix the sense in which*
“ *scripture-expressions are understood by the*
“ *candidates for the office of public teaching:*
“ A little attention, you continue, would
“ have saved you this trouble, and have
“ shewn you, that the distinction is rather
“ *verbal than real.*” — Curious solution!
— But could you blame me, Sir, for expect-
ing from the *Regius* PROFESSOR of the uni-
versity of *Cambridge*, a distinction rather
real than *verbal*? — Such an one was ex-
pected, I can assure you, from Dr. RU-
THERFORTH. But I was mistaken. “ This
“ was the whole mystery.” — The distinc-
tion, all the while I was engaged in search-
ing out its *real* force, had none, or not
much. It was rather *verbal* than *real*.

† Charge, p. 11.

YOU now think it time to come to the points in question between us: And yet what you do here is little more than to repeat the EXAMINER's observations; and this, very confusedly and inaccurately; so that it is not easy to follow you and give the reader an idea of what you mean, without trespassing upon his patience, and exercising my own to a degree, to which even my great respect for any thing that comes from you, is not sufficient to carry me. Could I find in this second VINDICATION any one thing directly offered to invalidate my remarks on the force and tendency of your argument, I would pass over all the rest and come immediately to that. But, instead of attempting a manly defence against the charge of reasoning on the detestable principles of popery, and thus supporting in its proper dignity the character of VINDICATOR, which you have assumed, you content yourself with picking out, puerile employment! any thing that you fancy will derogate from the authorship of the EXAMINER.

“ BUT.

“ BUT I must take your performance as
“ I find it.”— I had observed, that the right
which you undertook to vindicate, whatever
it should appear to be on examination,
was not by your argument confined to *pro-*
testant churches, but belonged equally to
the *church of Rome*. Lest the reader should
be prejudiced against your argument on *that*
account, before the merits of it had been
tried by an enquiry into its nature and ten-
dency, I observed, that this was not *of itself*
“ a sufficient reason why a protestant should
“ refuse to admit *it* any more than the most
“ allowed claim which that church makes
“ in common with all protestant churches.”
— But, see the return made me for this
piece of candour! I am represented as
hereby confessing, that this observation,
on the claim belonging to the *church of*
Rome, is “ *nothing to the purpose**.” Strange,
Sir, that candour itself should be thus treat-
ed by you! Is such a return for endeavour-
ing to prevent any prejudice being conceiv-

* 2 Vind. p. 2.

ed against you, the encouragement you give your antagonist to continue the fair method of discussing the question, in which he set out, and which he has hitherto preserved?— But, Sir, though I am thus tempted, I am not to be prevailed upon, by the ill usage, to return it otherwise, than by demonstrating and exposing your unfairness; nor this needlessly, and in every instance (that would be endless) but only, where to do it is consistent with the justice I owe myself. To expose your unfairness in the present instance I will give myself the trouble to transcribe the passage and particularize those circumstances in it, which are levelled so unmercifully at my credit as an EXAMINER. In return, however, for which trouble to myself and tax upon the patience of our readers, it is expected, you will be so reasonable, as to excuse my *omitting* to take notice of several other instances of the like nature; at least, in so particular and full a manner as I shall this.

YOUR

YOUR words on the occasion are: "Having thus *confessed* the *single* observation, which you make on the tendency of my argument, to be *nothing to the purpose*; you repeat it, that your readers may be sure to remember it; and then, *taking leave* of the subject, you *go on* to enquire into the tendency of *my* reasonings on the nature and extent of the right itself, not as proved by this particular argument, which you undertake to examine, but by this, or by any other argument whatsoever*."

LET us now mark the truth, candour, consistency and perspicuity of this representation. First, for the *confession* which I am here said to make, *viz.* that my observation on the tendency of your argument is *nothing to the purpose*. Can you hope, Sir, that your most partial readers will believe you, when you tell them, that I make *such* a confession? — If they have never read the

* 2 Vind. p. 5.

EXAMINER, and are ever so much inclined to take your word in your own cause, yet they must hesitate here. They will never believe, were it only for their partiality towards yourself, Sir, that a man of your abilities and eminence would have undertaken to write a serious answer to one, who had *confessed*, “that the single observation, “which he made on the tendency of your “argument, was *nothing to the purpose*.”

By this, however, you might mean only to persuade your readers, that the observation made was really *nothing to the purpose*. If you would have them think so, I must do myself the justice to shew them, that it was quite *to my purpose*.

THE EXAMINER had remarked, that, from the *professed* design of your performance, we should expect to find the VINDICATION limited to the governours of *protestant* churches; — but that, throughout the argument, we have no sight of *such limitation*. It was not only remarked: The
argument

argument itself was produced, examined, and shewn, as it should seem, to your own satisfaction, not to be limited to the defence of our own or any other *protestant* church, but equally to justify the church of *Rome* in claiming the right in question. And was this *nothing to the purpose?* — Will you so tamely give up, that your intention was to vindicate subscription on the foot of *protestantism?* — Why then, in laying down your design, did you lead us to expect, that you intended to defend it on that footing, by calling it a “right, which the governours of “*our own*, or of any other *protestant* church “have, &c *?” — If it was not your intention to restrict the argument, in favour of subscription, to *protestant* churches, it was *beside your purpose* to mention them particularly; and the whole design of your *VINDICATION* was *nothing to the purpose*: Since “the writer †, who led you, to employ “your thoughts on the subject of subscription” no where denies, that the right

* Charge, p. 1.

† Ibid. p. 6.

you contend for may be vindicated upon *certain* principles, *viz. popish* principles; but only, its consistency with those of the *reformation*. On the other hand; if you did intend (as I hoped and was willing to believe you did) to argue for the consistency of the right with the principles of *protestants*, then it certainly was *to my purpose*, to shew, that you had missed of *your's*; that your argument was so framed as not to answer your *purpose*, which was to vindicate *our* church, or any other *protestant* church, as such.

BUT, to proceed to another circumstance in this same passage. You represent the observation above-mentioned, not only, as *nothing to the purpose*, but as “the *single*” observation, which I make on the tendency of your argument.” — I am sorry for it, Mr. PROFESSOR; but you oblige me to appear something rude in contradicting you. For, besides observing, that your argument, admitting its validity, proved the right in question to belong as much to the church
of

of *Rome* as to *protestant* churches, I enquired into the nature and extent of the right claimed, and then made the following *observations*, viz. “ that the right you contend
“ for is *unlimited* in its extent ; that the
“ principles on which you have reasoned,
“ justify the claim of the church of *Rome*,
“ in every thing that she requires of her clergy ; and, that the ministers and pastors
“ of every other church exercise that office
“ unwarrantably ; or else, that this general
“ right contended for is altogether *insignificant*, without *meaning* and *effect* *.” —

See, Sir, the tendency of your argument afresh exposed ! Before exposed, from a real concern for the advantage such reasoning might give the papist against our common cause, as *protestants* : Now exposed, in my own defence, against your unfair dealing ! — At neither time, assure yourself, by way of *personal reflection*.

BUT indeed your own words in the passage under examination (if any sense can be

* Examination, p. 32.

made out of them) are against you. For you say (with what consistency be your own friends the judges) that, “*taking leave* of the subject, I *go on* to enquire into the tendency “ of your reasonings.” This is very darkly expressed, to be sure; and, therefore, it doth not become me to be any farther positive of the implication of your words, than that, if they have any meaning, they seem to contradict what you had before said.

I HAVE not done with the sentence yet. — You say, that I “ go on to enquire into “ the tendency of *your* reasonings on the “ nature and extent of the right itself.” — *Your* reasonings on the nature and extent of the right! I do not remember that there are any such throughout the VINDICATION. It was not *you* that had reasoned “ on the “ nature and extent of the right” in question. You quite confound the method of the VINDICATION with that of the EXAMINATION. It was the EXAMINER that took this method of enquiring into the nature and extent of the right, which you had undertaken to vindicate ;

dicare; in other words, I examined in what *extent* you had actually asserted it, that I might determine the *nature* of it. The result was: The right, in the extent you asserted it, appeared to be of the *same nature* with that which the church of *Rome* claims, and which every consistent protestant disclaims.

WHAT you can mean, therefore, by saying, that I “ go on to enquire into the tendency of *your* reasonings on the nature “ and extent of the right itself,” I am at a loss to know. Nor less perplexing is the remainder of this sentence, *viz.* “ not as “ proved by this particular argument, which “ you undertake to examine, but by this, “ or by any other argument whatsoever.” — I am quite embarrassed. I want your help to clear up the difficulty. I would *spend eight pages* to find out your meaning. But I remember the ill success which attended my search for your meaning on a former occasion; and I shall not soon forget the *cause* of it.

HAVING

HAVING thus, at some length, considered the truth, candour, consistency and perspicuity of what you have said in the passage above transcribed, I now think myself at liberty to attend your reflections of *this kind* in a more brief manner.

ENQUIRING into the *extent* of the right you contend for, the EXAMINER remarked upon the indeterminate manner, in which you had expressed yourself, in asserting the same with respect to *some* confession of faith and doctrines. This word, *some*, seemed to me to express the extent in which you argued for the right of church-governours, in the case of subscription, in so indefinite, indeterminate, and vague a manner, that I thought it necessary to collect your sentiments on that head from other expressions, which were more definite and determinate. — But here again all my care and caution have served but to give offence. In the following very polite terms you attempt to justify the perspicuity of your language, and to expose the needless perplexity of the Ex-

AMINER.

AMINER. "No very deep insight into the
"idiom of your mother tongue was necessa-
"ry to discover, that I use the word, *some*,
"here as an *indefinite*, not as a definite pro-
"noun, to state confessions *indeterminately*,
"not to distinguish one sort from another."*

—I find you did, Sir. The case is just as
you say. You used the word *indefinitely*,
and not *definitively*. You stated confes-
sions *indeterminately*; and you did not, in
stating them, *distinguish* one sort from ano-
ther; which the EXAMINER was so unrea-
sonable as to wish had been done, lazy
man! because it would have saved him
trouble. And, after all his perplexity and
pains, it appeared through the medium of a
little logic, that the word, *some*, must be
meant full as *indefinitely* and without limita-
tion to any particular sort of confessions, as
you would have it.

FROM this part of the EXAMINATION
you skip at once to the end of it, to take no-
tice of my having changed the word *an* into
any. I did so, Sir. And what then?—If the

* 2 Vind. p. 5.

HAVING thus, at some length, considered the truth, candour, consistency and perspicuity of what you have said in the passage above transcribed, I now think myself at liberty to attend your reflections of *this kind* in a more brief manner.

ENQUIRING into the *extent* of the right you contend for, the EXAMINER remarked upon the indeterminate manner, in which you had expressed yourself, in asserting the same with respect to *some* confession of faith and doctrines. This word, *some*, seemed to me to express the extent in which you argued for the right of church-governours, in the case of subscription, in so indefinite, indeterminate, and vague a manner, that I thought it necessary to collect your sentiments on that head from other expressions, which were more definite and determinate. — But here again all my care and caution have served but to give offence. In the following very polite terms you attempt to justify the perspicuity of your language, and to expose the needless perplexity of the Ex-

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* 2 Vind. p. 5.

latter word expreſſeth your own meaning more clearly and fully than the former, the change is for the better. Can you ſay that your meaning is perverted by it? — One would expect, in objecting to me this change, that you would have complained of my miſrepreſenting your meaning. But this you have not done; becauſe you knew the complaint would be groundleſs. For the change was not made before it had been demonſtrated, that, by your reaſoning, you reſtricted the right of enjoining ſubſcription to no one particular confeſſion or one ſort of confeſſion, but extended it to *any* one, or any ſort of, confeſſion, which the church-governour ſhould *judge* proper to ſet forth.

You content yourſelf, therefore, with calling it “ a *clumſy* buſineſs, that may poſſibly diſguſt *ſome* of my readers.” How many of my readers this *clumſy* buſineſs of ſyllogyzing may have diſguſted, it is not quite ſo clear from this expreſſion of your’s. The word, *ſome*, in this place, as before, has no fixed or determinate meaning. You
uſe

use it, I suppose, as “ an *indefinite* not as a “ *definitive* pronoun, to state the number “ of disgusted readers *indeterminately*.”

However, as you seem to think, that I construed this term, as applied to confessions, in too extensive a sense, I will be more moderate in applying it here, and suppose, that this syllogistic method may possibly have disgusted only some *one* of my readers; but *what one* that may be, I think proper to imitate you, Sir, in leaving it *indeterminate*.

BUT here, Sir, permit me to expostulate with you a little, and to ask you, Whether you can find, throughout the EXAMINATION, any such rude and vulgar treatment, as this which I have received from you? — Where have I once reflected on your authorship? — And, if you could name the place, I will engage it shall not appear under such coarse terms. Or, should I in this letter retort these unpolite reflections, and pick out from the SECOND VINDICATION some sentence, as a fit subject for calling it a
“ clumsy

“clumsy business,” and representing the VINDICATOR, as hardly acquainted with the idiom of his mother tongue, what would you think of me, in point of common decency and good manners? — I will not seek for an expression that may give the fittest occasion for a return; for I mean not to return the rudeness at all, but only to expose it to your own view by the supposition of a retaliation. The very first sentence in your letter will serve the purpose.

You begin — “ Sir, in my discourse,
 “ which you undertake to examine, I
 “ *prove* the right of church-governours, to
 “ require the clergy to subscribe to an
 “ established confession, by *two* arguments”
 &c. &c. — On which you are to suppose
 me to remark as follows; *viz.* “ This
 “ clumsy business and *positive* assertion, that
 “ you have *proved* your point, would have
 “ been more properly placed towards the
 “ end of, than at the very entrance on,
 “ your defence. As it stands, it cannot
 “ convince your readers of the truth of
 “ your

“ your reasoning, while it may possibly
“ *disgust* some of them, either with the posi-
“ tivity expressed in it, or with the little
“ acquaintance it shews you to have with
“ the *idiom of your mother tongue.*”—Had I
begun my letter thus and continued writing
to you in this strain, I should deserve, in
your next, not worse language, indeed, than
you have used in your last. I fancy, how-
ever, you would not hesitate to conclude
me *one* of your *disgusted* readers.

BUT see, sir, how different a treatment
you may expect from your present corres-
pondent, should he be inclined to continue
the correspondence. To one, who could
have made the rude remark above supposed,
I would have observed, by way of apology
for you (and I could have done it sincerely,
as I believe it to be the case) — that the
PROFESSOR meant not to be *positive* in the
affair, as if the question was already deci-
ded by the irrefragable force of his reason-
ing, but only to remind the reader, that he
had made use of *two* arguments to prove his
position

position—that the stress should be laid not upon the word, *proving*, but upon the number of arguments produced, which was *two*; whereas the EXAMINER had only considered *one* of them—that, though the VINDICATOR had used the word, *prove*, which, in our language, signifies, to establish a proposition by *certain* and *infallible* arguments, yet it was plain from the turn and general tenour of the passage, that he meant no more by it in this place, than if it had been expressed more softly and modestly thus, “ I have *attempted to prove* by “ two arguments”—that his readers, therefore, were unreasonably *disgusted*, if disgusted, with the positive manner of expression, which appears to be accidental rather than designed.

AND, as to the disgust which the too nice and delicate remarker might have conceived at your using the word so *improperly*, I would endeavour to remove it, by shewing him;—that he could not justly attribute such an use of this term to the PROFESSOR'S

FESSOR's ignorance of the idiom of his *mother tongue*, as it might be well, and more honourably for the writer, accounted for on another principle — that the term, *probo*, from whence our english word, *prove*, was so familiar to the PROFESSOR *e cathedrâ*, that the substitution of the one for the other, in point of sense, (the terms so alike in sound too) is not only quite excusable, but shews in what sense he intended it should be taken, *viz.* undoubtedly in the sense of the original, which is not, *to prove*, but, *to try*, or *examine*. The whole process else of a *divinity act* would be confounded. For any one knows, that knows any thing of *that* matter, that the question must be decided in favour of the *respondent*. Yet the *opponent*, producing his arguments *e contra*, always makes use of the word, *probo*: Properly: for he does not mean by it, “ *I prove* to the contrary of your position,” but only, “ *I try*, or *examine* your “ question” by such an argument: And, when he has tried it by several arguments of the same cast, and tried it in vain (for
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the *respondent* stands up there stock-proof against them all) then he tries it by an argument of a different complexion, ushered in with, *probo aliter*. So that this instance of inaccuracy, with respect to the idiom of our language, is too trifling to argue from *thence* the PROFESSOR's ignorance of his mother-tongue. — In some such way as this, sir, I should be candid enough to defend you, and account for any little inelegancies of this sort, without picking them out and seeking an advantage from them to obscure the general and prevailing elegance, both of style and manner, which so much adorns your compositions.

“BUT let us go on, you say, with our “enquiry.” — Pray, Sir, when did you *begin* it? — You have been hitherto so much employed in casting reflection and pecking at such supposed blemishes in the EXAMINATION as, if real, are foreign to the subject, that you have lost sight of your business. Give me leave to remind you of it. The EXAMINER has charged you with reasoning

soning on principles inconsistent with those of the reformation. Your business was to refute the charge. Have you yet attempted it? — You have not. And what you now observe relative to it is nothing like an *argument* in refutation of the charge, but appears more in the form of a *concession*.

AFTER a careful examination of your manner of reasoning, I had observed, that the confession, to which you contend that church-governours have a right to enjoin subscription, is *such* an one as they shall *please* to enjoin; that, though it should happen to be, in many articles, very *unscriptural*, yet it is enough, that it is scriptural in *their opinion*; if you will, in *their judgement*; nay, to let you see, that I seek not any advantage from a mere word, *to the best* of their judgment. In short, I observed, that *they* are by you made the only judges of *orthodoxy*; and, therefore, have an *unlimited* right of requiring of their clergy subscription to the established confession.

Now, let us see whether in your SECOND VINDICATION you confine this right of

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church-governours within narrower limits than their *own judgement*? — Whether you do not allow it to extend to *any* confession, which *they* judge or *believe* to be scriptural? — Your words are: “ A right of requiring subscription to an established confession, when it is deduced from the duty of church-governours to take care, that the instructions, delivered to the people of their own church by the public pastors and teachers of it, should be agreeable to the truth of the gospel, is *limited* by this principle to *such* a confession *only*,” as what? — “ as those governours, according to the best of their judgement, *believe* to contain the faith and doctrines, which were taught mankind by CHRIST and his apostles*.” What a limitation is this! Their right extends no farther than to *such* a confession *only*, as *they believe* to be scriptural. Pray, Sir, does the church of *Rome*, in matters of faith and doctrine, carry her claim over *her* clergy any farther? — Does she require their subscription to any other confession, than *such* an one as *she judges* to be perfectly

* 2 Vind. p. 7.

found, saving and orthodox?—Does the POPE pretend — ? But why mention I the pretensions of the POPE ? — They affect not you in the least. This same POPE, when held up in all his authority over both his clergy and laity, regarding these matters of faith and doctrines, is, in your estimation, “ a
“ mere *bugbear*, which may frighten chil-
“ dren, but which men of common sense
“ will laugh at.” Excuse my weakness, Sir, but I am really frightened at your intrepidity. Can you so unconcernedly contemplate that *monstrum horrendum*, which frightened all the children of the reformation ? — If his *doctrines* be rather ridiculous than damnable, yet I should have thought, that his *pretensions to power* might be considered by you as of a more serious nature, as well as much more extensive and exorbitant, than you seem to apprehend them. I little expected, when I had exposed your principles of reasoning, as tending to justify the pretensions of the POPE himself, to be told, that “ the pretensions
“ of this same POPE” are not so very exor-
bitant

bitant as I have represented them to be; that I have used *artifice* in picturing this MAN OF SIN; who, however, to “men of common sense, who cannot but see through “my artifice,” is not so very frightful; that “I shall find his pretensions to lie *within a “very narrow compass,*” reduced thereto by the VINDICATOR’s reasonings. But I will transcribe this remarkable passage. For, without quoting your very words, it would be unreasonable to expect credit in so improbable a representation of your sentiments.

YOUR words are: — “You will find, “that the pretensions of this same pope, “who is, when held up as you hold him up “here*, a *bugbear*, which may frighten

* It is proper to let your readers see *how* I hold him up here, that they may judge whether I have used *artifice*. My words are as follow: “Doth the church of *Rome* “set forth the damnable doctrines of transubstantiation, “purgatory, praying to saints, with a monstrous heap of “other absurdities, contradictions and superstitions, to “be taught by the clergy, and to be believed and practised by the people? — She hath good right to enjoin “them all, in an *established* confession of faith and doctrines, to be subscribed by all those that are desirous of “preaching the gospel, and to be a rule of faith and “practice to the laity. It matters not that they are children,

“ children, but which men of common
“ sense, who cannot but see through your
“ *artifice*, will laugh at, are reduced by my
“ principles and reasonings within a *very*
“ narrow compass*.” — *Euge*VINDICATOR!

— There is no arguing against *fact*, I own,
Sir. And, if you can make it appear that
his HOLINESS, since your first VINDICA-
TION was written, has actually lowered his
pretensions and *narrowed* his claim of
power, I will dismiss the formidable idea I
have of POPERY. I will acknowledge the
exactness of your reasonings, and will en-
gage to measure church-power for the fu-
ture by your scale of principles. But, as I
cannot suppose your book to have had an
effect so consequential to all Christendom,

“ ed *damnable* doctrines, by those that are without the
“ pale of that church; or, that they be thought so by
“ numbers of the laity *professedly* of that church; or,
“ indeed, that they are *damnable* in themselves, polluting
“ the fountain of life, making the word of GOD serve a
“ lye and delusion, and turning the grace of the gospel
“ into the hardest bondage — so long as the POPE, the
“ *church-governour*, judges them to be scriptural and fav-
“ ing doctrines.”

* 2 Vind. p. 20.

I remain

I remain possessed of the idea, that the pretensions of this same POPE are very exorbitant.

It is more to be regretted, however, than to be wondered at, that they appear not in the same light to one that can seriously avow, that the governours of our church hold both clergy and laity to be *bound*, in conscience, to believe and practise whatever is contained in the established confession. Continue not to vindicate the shameful principle. Venture to disavow it. Say, you was not aware of the extensive consequence of such an assertion; that you meant not to approach so near the confines of the church of *Rome*; that, by declaring every *layman*, who assents not to every article of our established confession, a violator of his conscience, you did not apprehend, that you gave the papist the advantage of arguing upon your own principle against our original separation from his church; in a word, that you are willing and ready to retract what you have declared, finding that you have expressed yourself rather unguardedly and beside your intention.

You

You may think this *retraction* somewhat aukward. Perhaps you found it too hard of digestion. But you might have seen, that you had to deal with one, who would have scorned to take the least advantage of an expression against your meaning; who, though he thought it incumbent upon him, in this day of danger from the efforts of popery, to expose the tendency of your reasoning, expressed, at the same time, his hope, nay, assured himself, that you *meant* not to carry the claim of church-power to the pitch your argument had raised it. You might have assured yourself of meeting, at least, with no insult from the EXAMINER, on the ingenuous concession. And, if I know my own heart, I should have felt, for the freedom I took with your argument, some regret mixed with the perfect consciousness of my honest views in taking it.

BUT, when you are hardy enough to avow the sentiment, that not only the subscribing clergy, but the whole body of the laity are *bound*, in conscience, to believe and
practise

practise whatever is set forth by the church-governours;—when, after such a *pretension* to the power of judging the consciences of all dissenters from the establishment, has been shewn to bear so near an affinity to the *pretensions* of the POPE himself, instead of attempting to vindicate your sentiments from such an imputation, you appear unconcerned at it, as no such discreditable matter;—when you can tell me quite coolly, that “the pretensions of this same pope are reduced by such principles and reasonings within a *very narrow* compass:” I say, sir, when, instead of disproving or even denying the charge of such principles and such reasonings, you dare to avow *them* and the *pretensions* that are founded on them, as very moderate and reasonable, I know not how to think that which I was inclined to think of your church principles. I would be candid where it is possible in the construction of your meaning. In this instance more especially I have laboured to give some favourable meaning, something of a *protestant* cast, to your words; but without success. Might you not be understood, in
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observing that “the pope’s pretensions were
“reduced by your principles and reasonings
“within a very narrow compass,” as only
asserting, that the POPE would, *if* guided by
your principles and reasonings (which were
contrary to his) reduce his pretensions from
their present exorbitancy within a much
narrower compass, than they are?—If this
interpretation of your words could be allow-
ed, although they would still contain but a
bare assertion, without any proof of the
moderation of your pretensions to church-
power, yet it would shew that you was not
quite indifferent to the charge of reasoning
on the very same principle with the papist,
in respect of established confessions, and the
obligation to assent to them. But this in-
terpretation favourable for yourself would
be incompatible with that charity you ex-
press in this same sentence for his HOLINESS,
concerned at my exaggeration of his pre-
tensions and unchristian-like artifice in
holding him up as a frightful monster.

WELL, sir, you have a right to be under-
stood in the sense, in which you have so
fully explained yourself. But, whether it

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is

is so consistent in a *protestant* divine to *entertain* such favourable sentiments of the POPE's pretensions, or so creditable for him to *avow* them, I would have you to reflect upon it. I must observe, however, that whatever credit I may have lost on the other hand *, *viz.* "by carrying the judgment and claim of the people too far, —" "who are not always, you observe, (and "think you have scripture for it too) the "properest judges for *themselves*," this is not a time, in which you can expect thanks from any denomination of sincere *protestants* for such a representation of papal power — A time, when *POPERY* is making her approaches almost in form upon us. For so we are given to understand in two *different* ways; by *complaints* of her from one quarter (those weak children, I suppose, that are soon frightened at the *bugbear*) by encomiums on our complaisance towards her from another quarter (those men of common sense, I suppose, who can laugh at the *bugbear*, or pass by it, *without observation* and *without offence* †.)

* 2 Vind. p. 11.

† Vid. Confessional, pref. p. 37.

67. See also answer to Dr. Mahew's Observations.

BESIDES,

BESIDES, Sir, admitting that the EXAMINER is justly accused by you of having been too severe in his description of this spiritual prince of darkness, and declaiming with some exaggeration against his power within his own jurisdiction, yet the accusation does not justify *your* principles and reasonings. If I did use a little *artifice* in magnifying the terrors that encircle this MAN OF SIN, in the exercise of his authority; does it make *your* claim of church-power appear the more reasonable, to tell me, that you are among those men of *common sense*, who can see through my artifice, and are not to be frightened, like a child, at a mere bugbear. It would have been more creditable for your principles, if you had not discovered my *artifice* against the POPE, but suffered his pretensions to be considered in the formidable light, in which I had *bolden them up*; to have contrasted *your* pretensions to church-power with *his*, and have shewn within how much narrower a compass your own lay.

THIS was your business. This would have been to your credit, as a protestant; and,

and, if you could have done it, it would have effectually refuted the EXAMINER who undertook to shew, that you have claimed in behalf of the governours of our own or any other protestant church, as much power over their clergy and laity, as the pope himself. But be ingenuous, Sir. Was not the case thus? — You was pushed by the EXAMINER to the very gate of popery. *There* you was to make your stand and defend your principle, as you could. It was become the same thing, which you should attempt to justify; the pretensions of the POPE or your own.

BUT, I come now to speak to that difference between the power of the church of *Rome* and that of a *protestant* church which you charge me with having overlooked and would remind me of. “ Different churches you suppose to be under
“ different governours, and this right to
“ belong independently to each of them:
“ which supposition, you say, implies,
“ that the claim of the governours, or go-
“ vernour, of any one church to a supre-
“ macy over *all* is a mere usurpation*.” —

* 2 Vind. p. 20.

Very

Very true ; it doth so. And what then ? —
The EXAMINER never charged you with
contending for the POPE's *supremacy* over
all churches. Let me remind *you*, that you
are shifting the question here. The ques-
tion is not about the power of one church
over *all* other churches ; but whether you
have not contended for the governours of
our own or any other protestant church,
having a right, in matters of faith and con-
science, to as great a power in the *particu-
lar church* over which they preside, as the
POPE of *Rome* claims over *papists* ;—whether
the governours of protestant churches can,
consistently with their principles, exercise
within their *respective* churches, all the
power, which the church of *Rome* exer-
cises, in matters of faith and conscience,
over *her* members. There was no occa-
sion, therefore, to remind me of what you
have said of the POPE's *supremacy* over *all*
churches. It was not to my purpose to
take notice of it. I examined into the na-
ture and extent of the right you contended
for, in favour of the governours of every
particular church. And it appeared to be
a right,

54 *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. RUTHERFORTH.*

a right, to require the clergy to subscribe to whatever confession of faith and doctrines they [the church governours] should judge proper to set forth, and to propose the same to be believed and practised by the laity, judging them to be *bound* in conscience so to believe and practise.

Now "this right, you remind me, be-
" longs independently to each governour."
Both the clergy and laity of any particular church are bound in conscience to believe all those articles, which the governour of that church sets forth. Do you not blush, Sir, at the consequence in view? The reformation from popery is unjustifiable. The reformers and king HENRY himself were bound in conscience to believe and practise whatever was contained in the established confession of that church, of which they were once members. The POPE, their church-governour, in considering them as *bound*, in conscience, to believe and practise every thing set forth by the authority of the church, arrogated to himself no greater authority over *them*, than that which you suppose our church-governours have a right to exercise

exercise over the members of *our* church. Did not the reformers then violate their consciences in breaking from the church, and believing and practising things contrary to those which, on your principle, they were *bound*, in conscience to believe and practise?—

You cannot say, that the POPE, in this case, exercised this power, of *judging the consciences of men*, over members of “a separate church,” that had a governour of their own. For they had then no other visible church-governour than the POPE. — See, Sir, what becomes of your principle, that the *laity*, as well as the subscribing clergy, are *bound* in conscience, to believe and practise whatever is set forth in an established confession of faith. The principle is of the very spirit and genius of POPERY; and your distinction, of the power being lodged in every *particular* governour of a “separate church,” does not reduce the *power itself* within narrower limits, while it encreases the number of POPES.

BUT you are not content with having pleaded the cause of *all* church-governours, with respect to this spiritual dominion over
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the clergy and laity. You are for giving this power to every private clergyman over the laity of his own parish; nay, over whomsoever he may be authorized to address from the pulpit. Thus you go on improving, in this SECOND VINDICATION, upon the excellent position laid down in your FIRST. I wonder how much further you would carry it, if you had encouragement to write a THIRD. How considerably you have improved upon it already, the following view of this matter will sufficiently demonstrate.

“ If the people (the EXAMINER had ob-
 “ served*) *may*, in case of a conscientious
 “ dissent, seek other instruction than that
 “ which is provided for them, they *ought*
 “ not. For the PROFESSOR ventures to as-
 “ sert, that *the governours of the church,*
 “ *though they do not bind the laity to subscribe*
 “ *to the established confession, yet understand*
 “ *them to be bound in conscience, as much as*
 “ *the clergy, to believe and practise what is*
 “ *contained in it†.*” — To shew the rea-
 sonableness of this assertion you make the
 following appeal to the EXAMINER :

* Examination, p. 25, 26.

† Charge, p. 14.

“ You

“You, Sir, are a clergyman. You
“preach to the laity in your parish: and,
“perhaps, you may sometimes preach in
“your turn to the clergy at a *Visitation*.
“Suppose now, that you were at liberty to
“deliver to both whatever doctrine you
“thought proper; and were not confined
“at all by any subscription, you would, I
“presume, deliver such doctrine, extracted,
“according to the best of your judgement,
“from the scriptures, and expressed in plain
“and determinate language, as you under-
“stood your hearers, whether *laity* or *cler-*
“*gy*, to be *bound in conscience* to believe and
“practise*.”

You *presume* I should do this. You are mistaken, Sir. I should deliver such doctrines to them as *I*, in my conscience, believed to be agreeable to the word of God. But I should not “understand *them* to be “bound in conscience to believe” what I told them. So far from it, that I should “understand them to be bound” to *try* and *examine* the doctrines delivered, every man for himself, as far as he had opportunity and

* 2 Vindication, page 16.

ability. I preach to them my real sentiments of such and such doctrines. Nevertheless, how can I know and consider myself to be fallible, and yet judge them, every man, whether *clergy* or *laity*, to be bound in conscience to believe as I do? — Though I have used my best judgement in explaining to them some passage of scripture, relating, for instance, to the doctrine of the TRINITY, the *incarnation*, the *atonement*, the *state of the soul on death*; or, if you will, at a *Visitation*, some text relating to our present enquiry concerning *church-authority*, its nature and bounds; I may yet be, as many divines have been on such subjects, mistaken, and may deliver a doctrine contrary to the word of God. Are my hearers, whether clergy or laity, *bound* in conscience to believe it, because it was scriptural according to the best of *my* judgement? — I will answer plainly; though, in your opinion, by so doing I make a great venture of my credit with church-governours. I should *not* understand the laity *themselves* to be so *bound*. If I did, I could, with no reason, object the principle to you. Since
 “ I should

“ I should do, as a private clergyman, the
“ very same thing in my discourses, which
“ is *papist* tyranny, when you suppose it to
“ be done by church-governours in an esta-
“ blished confession*.”

HOWEVER, you think that I might safely
do it, and without the imputation of affect-
ing spiritual tyranny. If it should be object-
ed to me, as I had objected to church-go-
vernours, claiming a right of drawing up
an established confession of faith and doc-
trines on *this principle*, you could thus apo-
logize for me; *viz.* “ The best *excuse* [it
seems I should want an excuse then] which
“ I could think of for *you*, would be the
“ same which I offer for *them*; that you
“ endeavour to discharge your duty consci-
“ entiously; that, though you preach such
“ doctrines, as every christian, according to
“ the best of your judgement, is *bound* in
“ conscience to assent to, and make use of
“ such words and phrases as appear to you
“ most expressive of the true meaning of
“ the scriptures, from which you extract
“ those doctrines, and least likely to be mis-

* 2 Vind. p. 16.

“ understood,

“ understood, yet, as you know your
 “ judgement to be at best but fallible,
 “ when you have done this, you leave every
 “ man to judge and determine for himself,
 “ whether those doctrines are such as he
 “ ought to assent to or not. You would be
 “ likely enough to accept of this apology
 “ for *your own* conduct; though you will
 “ not allow it to be a sufficient justification
 “ of what I have supposed *church-govern-*
 “ *ours* to do *.” — Accept of this apology,
 Mr. PROFESSOR! — I reject it with indignation
 and with horror. — With indignation, that
 you think me capable of accepting so *weak*
 an apology for so great presumption. For,
 can any thing be conceived to be more
 weak than to profess, that “ I leave every
 “ man to judge and determine for himself,
 “ whether those doctrines are such as he
 “ ought to assent to *or not*,” at the same
 time that I *judge* him to be bound in con-
 science to *assent* to them? — With horror I
 reject your apology, to find a professed pro-
 testant, a divine of the church of *England*,
 pleading for such a conduct and offer-
 ing such an apology for it.

* 2 Vind. p. 17.

AND give me leave, Sir, now to call upon *you* with something of the same freedom that you have called upon the EXAMINER.—You, Sir, are a clergyman. You preach to the laity in your parish. You sometimes deliver a CHARGE to your clergy at a *Visitation*: and you *may, perhaps, sometimes*, give a lecture in divinity to such gentlemen as are qualifying themselves, in your UNIVERSITY, for the church. Suppose now, “that, in these several departments, “you were at liberty to deliver to all, both “clergy and laity, whatever doctrine you “pleased; to preach and to teach such divinity as you thought proper, unconfined “by any subscription;” you would, I really believe, Sir, deliver such doctrine, as *you judged* to be scriptural. But would you understand them all, as well clergy as laity, to be bound in conscience to believe every thing that you taught? — Yes truly: You are bold to profess you would understand them to be so bound.

WHAT then, if the writer of the CONFESSIO^NAL, who *may* be a clergyman, and, for aught I know, an ARCHDEACON, has
addressed

addressed to the clergy of *his* archdeaconry those sentiments concerning church-authority, which you have thought proper to impugn in a charge to the clergy of *your* archdeaconry? — Both of you I will suppose to have used your best judgements in searching for the true scripture doctrine on this head, and to deliver such sentiments only as you *believe* to be scriptural. How are your respective clergy to judge in this matter?—Why, according to you, the clergy in one archdeaconry are bound in conscience to believe what the writer of the **CONFSSIONAL** teaches concerning established confessions of faith and doctrines. The clergy in the other archdeaconry are bound in conscience to believe just the contrary. For the archdeacon of *Essex* delivered in his charge such doctrines only as he understood his hearers, whether clergy or laity, to be *bound in conscience* to believe and practise.

Thus, Sir, by attempting to illustrate the reasonableness of this position of yours by the supposed conduct of every private clergyman, you have but so much the more
 exposed

exposed it. You would have left it with more *consistency* in the possession of church-governours with whom alone, in your first VINDICATION, you had lodged it. But such a position can appear no where upon earth so *consistent* as in the church of *Rome*. *There* let it remain. Let us not rob her of her pretensions. Give her back whole and entire that claim to an infallible authority, in matters of faith and doctrine, which you would have separate churches to share with her. Be not forward to contest with her a claim, which cannot be pleaded for by you, either with consistence, or with credit to the establishment to which you belong.

AND think you, Sir, *thus* to keep in high credit with the governours of our church? —You seem to expect you will. This appears not more from your zealous contention for the extent of their right, in the case of subscription, than from the disheartening presage you have uttered against the imprudent EXAMINER, as having lost his credit with *them* by carrying the claim of
the

the *laity* too far *. Unkind Sir ! Could you not have enjoyed your own bright expectations from that quarter, without insulting the EXAMINER on his more humble hopes ? — But for yourself, Sir ; you have missed the mark, I think. Your zeal is not likely to please, which will be sure, if suffered to continue burning at this rate, to light a zeal of another sort, and occasion, perhaps, in *some* an officiousness of enquiry into these matters, which may be conducted with less decency than has been shown by the EXAMINER.

IF I should be mistaken, however, and your zeal be found acceptable to those, whom it appears to me more likely to offend, unenvied be your credit with them and the splendid effects of it ; well content for myself, if I can be allowed, through the mildness of government and under the most gracious PRINCE, to avow and promote those principles of Christian liberty, on which the reformation began, and on which principles a *farther* reformation in *some* protestant churches (take what um-

* 2 Vind. p. 11.

brage you please at my words, but remember I speak *indefinitely*) is much to be wished for.

BUT may heaven defend our church from that wild kind of reformation, which the principle you first argued upon and do now avow, would entitle it to begin! Whatever change our church-governours please to make, in matters of faith and doctrine, they have, on *your principle*, a right to make it, and it ought to be submitted to. Quakerism, presbyterianism, antinomianism, methodism, behmenism, quietism and what not, may be established by turns without any inconsistency. Instead of the doctrine of the holy and *undivided* TRINITY, as now set forth in our church, we may have one set forth with a *division* of the godhead, in an *Arian* form. Instead of being taught, as in the very first article, that God is a spirit, "*without body, parts or passions,*" we may be enjoined to believe and to teach "the conversion of the godhead into flesh," the passivity of the divine nature, and to represent the *blessed* God himself as having *suffered*

K *excruciating*

excruciating pains on the cross. In short; all the articles of our church may be changed and reversed too on *your principle*. Yes, Sir: All this may be done on your principle, which makes the governours of every particular church the *judges* of what every person, clergyman or layman, is bound in conscience to believe and practise. For, though they judge at present the established doctrines of the church of *England* to be truly scriptural, yet, according to your reasoning, “they may change them “without any inconsistency. It is no more “necessary, that a *protestant* church, than “that an individual protestant, should always maintain the same doctrines*.” So you say. — I am of opinion, however, that it is necessary for a *protestant* church, as *such*, always to maintain one doctrine at least, which the church of *England* at present maintains, and, I hope, never will part with; “*Holy scripture containeth all things “necessary to salvation: so that, whatsoever “is not read THEREIN, nor may be proved “THEREBY, is NOT to be required of ANY*

* Charge, p. 18.

“man,

A Letter to the Rev. Dr. RUTHERFORTH. 67

*“man, that it should be believed as an article
“of the faith, or be thought requisite or ne-
“cessary to salvation*.”*

BUT, Sir, you have drawn me out farther than I at first proposed to follow. I was willing to pay my respects to you in this way, the correspondence having been tendered on your part. This done, you must excuse my discontinuing it, *till* you have replaced the question on its proper hinge, off which, in your SECOND VINDICATION, you have manifestly thrown it. In search of *truth*, or to defend it, I will correspond with you as long as you please, yielding only to conviction. But, now the matter is become a mere contest of abilities, I find no reluctance in yielding, in *that* point, to Dr. RUTHERFORTH.

I am, Sir,

Your's, &c.

* Vide Article VI.

F I N I S.

Dr. D. A. RUTENFROTH.

12. The first of these is the fact that the
13. of the field, or the length of the
14. of the field, or the length of the

But, Sir, you have drawn me out further than I at first proposed to follow. I was willing to pay my respects to you in this way, the correspondence having been terminated on your part. Therefore, you must excuse my disengaging it, till you have placed the question on its proper basis, and which, in your second examination, you have manifestly shown it. In regard to the article, Sir, I will correspond with you as long as you please, & leave the conclusion to you, & your friends. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, &c.

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